

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 31

INTRODUCED BY T. SCHMIDT

A JOINT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF MONTANA ENCOURAGING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO WORK WITH OTHER AGENCIES IN EXAMINING THE PROBLEM OF TEEN USE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS BOTH IN GENERAL AND WHILE THE TEENAGER IS DRIVING OR RIDING IN A MOTOR VEHICLE; AND ENCOURAGING THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES TO REPORT ANY FINDINGS OR RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CHILDREN, FAMILIES, HEALTH, AND HUMAN SERVICES INTERIM COMMITTEE.

WHEREAS, teenagers, with their ready access to motor vehicles, have become increasingly mobile; and

WHEREAS, in 1998, 1,695 15- to 19-year-old teens were killed in alcohol-related traffic accidents nationwide; and

WHEREAS, in May 2000, a project called Aluminum Anonymous surveyed 700 miles of Montana roadsides for alcohol beverage containers, beginning at Gardiner and traveling through Bozeman, Helena, Lincoln, Great Falls, Harlowton, and Billings, finishing at the Wyoming state line; and

WHEREAS, the surveyors estimated that an average of 800 beer cans and beer bottles a mile are thrown on the highway annually; and

WHEREAS, Aluminum Anonymous interviewed professionals working with teenagers and adults in alcohol- and drug-related matters who collectively estimated that approximately 50% of the discarded containers came from teenagers; and

WHEREAS, in spite of a January 2001 national survey of teenagers by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism that included questions on drinking and drug use while driving and riding, too little is known about teenage alcohol and drug behavior after the car door closes; and

WHEREAS, a January 2001 report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse entitled "Shoveling Up: Impact of Substance Abuse on State Budgets" states that most of the money that Montana dedicates to substance abuse problems is spent on cleaning up the wreckage caused by addiction and substance abuse, rather than on prevention and treatment; and

WHEREAS, THE SAME STUDY REPORTS THAT IN 1998, 15.4% OR NEARLY \$256,000 OF MONTANA'S BUDGET AFFECTING JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONS, EDUCATION, HEALTH, CHILD AND FAMILY ASSISTANCE, MENTAL HEALTH, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND THE STATE WORKFORCE WAS SPENT ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE; AND

WHEREAS, not only does in-vehicle alcohol use impact the health of the state's teenagers, it also impacts the environment, contributing to the problem of roadside litter; AND

WHEREAS, THE INCIDENCE OF TEENAGERS OPERATING MOTOR VEHICLES WHILE USING ALCOHOL OR DRUGS IS EVIDENCE OF THE SERIOUS PROBLEM OF TEENAGE ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE IN GENERAL; AND

WHEREAS, ANY INVESTIGATION OF IN-VEHICLE TEENAGE ALCOHOL OR DRUG USE MUST ALSO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE WIDER-RANGING ISSUE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG TEENAGERS, ITS CAUSES AND RAMIFICATIONS, AND ITS COST TO THE STATE.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE AND THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
STATE OF MONTANA:

That the Legislature encourage the Department of Public Health and Human Services to work with the Department of Transportation and the Department of Justice in examining the problem of teenage in-vehicle drinking and drug use BOTH IN GENERAL AND WHILE OPERATING A MOTOR VEHICLE by:

(1) assembling the information that is known about this behavior, its causes, and its prevalence;

and

(2) identifying gaps in knowledge, state law, policy, agency programs, and agency interaction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Department of Public Health and Human Services report to the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee, if appropriate, with any findings, recommendations, suggested legislation, or plans for incorporating prevention of ~~teenage in-vehicle drinking and drug use~~ THE PROBLEMS ARTICULATED IN THIS RESOLUTION into the scope of the state's overall prevention strategies.

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